

## From the Editors

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Knowing how to say what one wants to say with the appropriate amount of directness is an important skill that language learners must master to achieve communicative competence. This pragmatic ability may include sentence- and morpheme-level accuracy such as correctly using modal verbs like *could*, but more importantly goes beyond these levels to the discourse level, where learners must figure out how to address their boss appropriately when making a request, acknowledge another's viewpoint in a discussion, or realize when someone is apologizing to them. In the articles in this year's volume, the authors tackle the acquisition of pragmatic ability from a variety of viewpoints.

In the first article, Eric Nelson explains the importance of *yes, but* arguing, a strategy that may help students be more persuasive and help them understand the structure of argumentation in their reading. His article discusses both the forms used to create this type of argumentation and how he goes about teaching it to advanced language learners.

In the second article, Andrew Cohen acknowledges the challenges L2 learners face as they attempt to comprehend pragmatic messages in the input and produce pragmatically comprehensible output in the target language. The author uses a series of examples to illustrate strategies learners can use to improve their pragmatic ability. The article includes advice for ESL/EFL learners and instructors alike.

Next, Rhonda Petree describes the results of teaching high-intermediate proficiency English language learners in an Adult Basic Education (ABE) program how to add softeners to requests that they may make in the workplace (*Please could you help me just a minute?*). The learners indicated that after instruction they felt more knowledgeable about making requests, and the classroom results reflected their knowledge and willingness to use softeners.

In this volume, we also have a wealth of new materials that have been reviewed by several reviewers. In the first book review, Karen Carr, Martha Dornbush, and Kiley Waite take a look at the latest version of the *Contemporary Topics* series, which focuses on academic oral skills and now includes both CDs and DVDs.

In her review of *Every Teacher's Toolkit: Closing the Achievement Gap for English Learners*, Deirdre Kramer examines a new text of ideas for working with K-12 students and shares her views on how it fits into the changing environment in schools. Are textbooks keeping up with the changing needs of ELL teachers?

Our third review, by Anne Lazaraton, gives an overview of the entire *Touchstone Series*, which includes not only textbooks but also accompanying DVDs and *Whiteboard Software*. This series, targeted toward young adults, teaches authentic language based on the American English subsection of the one billion-word Cambridge International Corpus.

In his review of *The Hmong Language in Wisconsin: Language Shift and Pragmatic Change*, Gregor Mieder describes how the author, Dr. Susan Burt, bears witness to fascinating changes the Hmong language is currently undergoing in our region of the world.

Ly Nguyen reviews *Writers at Work: From Sentence to Paragraph*. This is the first book in a four book series, which is aimed at adult ESL learners studying in the United States. Nguyen recommends the book with its emphasis on the process approach to writing and its support for beginning level writers. Exciting, well developed and highly relevant are all descriptors Nima Salehi uses in her review of an excellent new resource for adult educators in the TESOL world, an eight-video teacher training series called *Teaching ESL to Adults: Classroom Approaches in Action*. Available online for free, this is a definite “gotta check it out” tool for professional development.

Caroline Vang describes the dramatic *National Geographic* visuals, the engaging topics, and the global focus of *World English Intro*. This four skills text is aimed at low-beginning level students and is the first book in a series of four.

The final review, authored by Dongming Yang, explores the highest-level volume in the series *Future 5: English for Results*, which is designed to teach real-life English to adult language learners. We hope that you enjoy this issue of the *MinneWITESOL Journal* and invite you to consider submitting something for next year’s volume. We are glad for your submissions, your comments as readers, and the support of our institutions as we put the journal together.

This volume of the journal marks our fifth year of publishing online. Moving to this new format has been a big change, but one that we hope has made the information in the journal more accessible to a wider audience. A new addition to our online format is access to all of the past printed issues of *MinneWITESOL Journal* and its precursor *MinneTESOL* journal. Look for the link on the sidebar of the journal website for access to the archived editions in the Digital Conservancy at the University of Minnesota. Special thanks to Kristen Mastel and her staff at the University of Minnesota Libraries for helping us make these past issues available online.

At the end of this year, we hand off the editorial leadership of the journal to new editors, who we are sure will bring new insight, perspectives, and energy to these electronic pages. We would like to thank all of the authors and editorial review board members over the past years for their work on the journal. Without their expertise and willingness to help, *MinneWITESOL Journal* would not be able to provide high-quality articles of value to all of us. We, the current editors, look forward to being avid readers of the next stage of the journal.

Mike Anderson, University of Minnesota

Gail Ibele, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Andrea Poulos, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Bonnie Swierzbin, Hamline University